DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 046 PS 025 445

TITLE	An Overview of Full-Day Kindergarten.
INSTITUTION	Ohio State Legislative Office of Education Oversight, Columbus.
PUB DATE	Apr 97
NOTE	17p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Alternate Day Schedules; *Full Day Half Day Schedules; *Kindergarten; Outcomes of Education; Primary Education; Program Development; Program Evaluation; Scheduling; School Schedules
IDENTIFIERS	*Ohio; State Policy

ABSTRACT

This document provides an overview of full-day kindergarten, identifying the states requiring local school districts to offer full-day kindergarten; summarizing some of the national research on the effects of full-day kindergarten classes; describing current kindergarten practices in Ohio; and explaining proposed state budget appropriations relating to full-day kindergarten. Nationally, 12 states and the District of Columbia require full-day kindergarten availability. The most positive impact of full-day kindergarten is on children at risk of retention or academic failure. In most studies, full-day students show somewhat higher academic or social achievement than half-day students, with the effects diminishing after second grade. The percentage of Ohio kindergartens which are full-day is less than the national average. A larger percentage of kindergarten classrooms are full-day in poor urban or rural areas. Interviews with administrators from 26 districts revealed that full-day classes were offered when they believed that it would provide an academic advantage to all students, as a response to parents, or as a strategy to prevent retention and school failure. Instructional strategies in the full-day kindergartens included a more relaxed pace than the half-day schedule, repetition of the same experiences, or the addition of remedial instruction to the usual kindergarten curriculum. Superintendents attributed increased academic performance and first-grade adjustment to full-day kindergarten and indicated that many parents desired full-day classes. Proposed state budgeting would phase in additional funding in 21 large urban districts. (Appendices contain budgetary information for extended day or full-day kindergartens in Ohio and 19 references.) (KDFB)

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LEGISLATIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION OVERSIGHT
77 South High Street, 22nd Floor
Columbus, OH 43266-0927
Phone (614) 752-9686 Fax (614) 752-3058

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Shannon S. Lochtefeld

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An Overview of Full-Day Kindergarten

This information memo provides an overview of full-day kindergarten. It identifies the states that require local school districts to offer full-day kindergarten; summarizes some of the national research on the effects of full-day kindergarten classes; describes current kindergarten practices in Ohio; and explains proposed state budget appropriations relating to full-day kindergarten.

What is happening nationally?

Nationally, there is a wide range of state policies concerning kindergarten classes and children's attendance. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers, policies of 38 states require local education agencies to offer kindergarten, either half-day or full-day classes. Twelve of those states have a policy requiring local education agencies to offer full-day kindergarten. Exhibit 1 summarizes state policies regarding full-day kindergarten in 1996.

Exhibit 1
States That Require Full-Day Kindergarten to be Available

Districts Must Offer Full-Day Classes	Student Attendance Required
Alabama	No
Arkansas	Yes
District of Columbia	Yes
Florida	Yes
Georgia	No
Mississippi	No
North Carolina	No
North Dakota (and half day)	No
South Dakota (and half day)	No
Texas (and half day)	No
Vermont (and half day)	No
Virginia (and half day)	Yes
West Virginia	Yes

A report published by the Ohio Department of Education showed that Ohio offered a significantly smaller percentage of full-day kindergartens than the national average in 1986. Exhibit 2 compares Ohio kindergartens in 1986 to national statistics.

Exhibit 2
Kindergarten Classes in 1986

	Half-Day	Alternate-Day*	Full-Day
Ohio	77%	18%	5%
Nation**	67%	8%	27%

* full day, every other day

** total of percentages exceeds 100% due to rounding

As Exhibit 3 shows, today, Ohio has a smaller percentage of half-day kindergartens and a larger percentage of full-day kindergartens.

Exhibit 3
Changes in Ohio's Kindergarten Classes

	Half-Day	Alternate-Day*	Full-Day
1986	77%	18%	5%
1997**	67%	17%	15%

* full day, every other day

** total of percentages falls short of 100% due to rounding

What does the research say?

Taken as a whole, the body of research about full-day kindergarten classes is ambiguous about their effectiveness. Reports vary both in the degree to which they find full-day kindergarten to be beneficial and in the quality of their designs. Most are similar, however, in their discussion of some key issues related to full-day kindergarten. (A bibliography is appended.)

Results of research

The following summarizes the studies and reviews read by LOEO:

- For those studies that examined the effects of full-day kindergarten on children in different school readiness and socioeconomic groups, the results are the most compelling. The most significant positive effect, described with great frequency, is on children who are at risk of being retained or of academic failure.

- In a **few** studies, full-day students demonstrate higher academic and/or social achievement than students in half-day classes and the results last well beyond the second grade. In a 1988 follow up to a longitudinal study begun in 1979, students who had participated in full-day kindergarten had significantly higher scores on reading readiness tests in the first grade, on reading tests in the early elementary grades, and on achievement tests in grades three, five, and seven.

- In **most** studies, full-day students demonstrate somewhat higher academic and/or social achievement, but the effects diminish after the second grade. When comparing full-day to half-day, an Ohio study found that full-day students had better retention rates, fewer remedial reading program placements, and higher standardized test scores. The difference in test results, however, disappeared by the end of the second grade.

- The few remaining studies examined by LOEO show either no significant difference or mixed effects.

Flaws in research design

While there is no shortage of research on the effects of full-day kindergarten on the academic and social achievement of young people, there is disagreement on the quality of the studies completed to date. Literature reviews point to problems common among most studies in school settings. These problems include inadequate selection control (results may be determined by the backgrounds of children in the samples rather than the kindergarten class they attended) and failure to control for confounding variables. However, other reviewers feel that the quality and quantity of studies are sufficient for the results to be considered by policymakers as a basis for decisions even though designs could be improved.

Issues raised

Many issues that surface when discussing full-day kindergarten, and its alternatives, surround the question, "What is happening in the classroom?" There has not been as much investigation into the process as there has been into the impact of full-day kindergarten. For many of the studies LOEO examined, it is not known if the differences in student performance are due to the length of the school day or to the emphasis (academic or social) or quality of instruction.

For those studies that address classroom activities, the findings are contradictory. There is disagreement, for example, as to whether children in full-day classrooms spend more or less time in large group activities as opposed to individual activities. For many researchers and reviewers, the additional question is, "What should be happening in the classroom?" For example, is a full-day classroom an opportunity to spend more time on academic skills or an opportunity to introduce more creative and student-directed activities?

What is offered in Ohio?

Under the Ohio Department of Education's current minimum standards, all school districts must offer the equivalent of 2.5 hours of kindergarten each day. A child entering first grade must have successfully completed kindergarten or have obtained a waiver based on demonstrating necessary social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

Ohio districts

According to data provided to Ohio's Education Management Information System (EMIS):

- 50% of districts place all of their kindergarten students in classes for 2.5 hours every day.
- 27% of districts schedule all students for 5 hours of kindergarten on alternate days. Most of these districts are located in rural areas.
- 5% of districts go beyond the requirements and provide all kindergarten students with a full-day, everyday class. Only one large urban district provides full-day

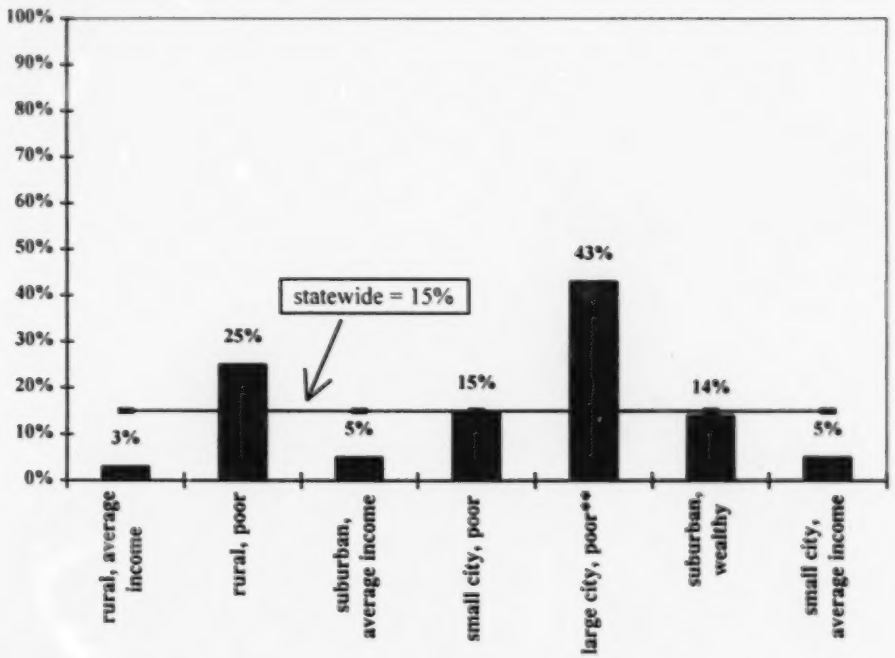
kindergarten for all of its students; most other districts offering all students full-day classes can be found in affluent suburban, rural, and poor, smaller urban areas.

- 13% of districts offer a full-day class as one of several options. These districts comprise a cross section of Ohio's districts, including three of the eight largest urban districts.
- 1% of districts offer a mix of alternate-day and half-day kindergartens.
- 4% of districts did not report information concerning kindergarten schedules in the EMIS.

Ohio classrooms

Statewide, 15% of all kindergarten classes are full-day. However, in poor urban and rural areas, a larger percentage of kindergarten classrooms are full-day. Exhibit 4 illustrates these results.

Exhibit 4
Percentage of Classrooms that are Full Day within each Comparison Group*

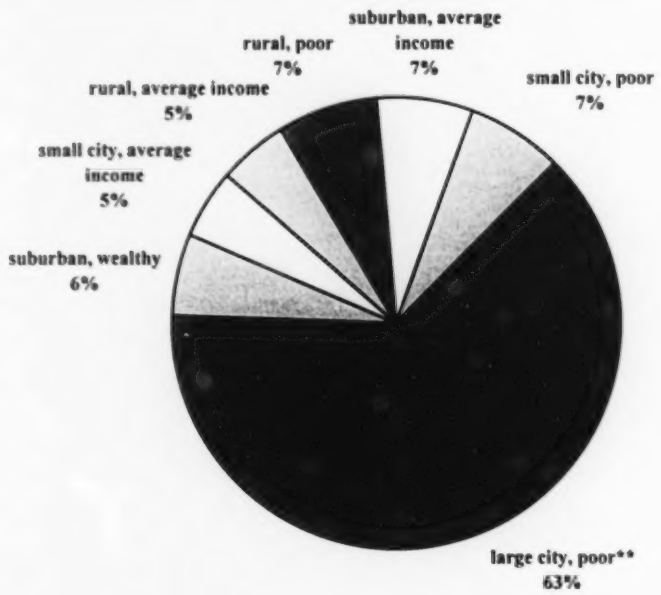


* Comparison groups cluster districts with similar socio-economic characteristics.
** Districts not reporting include Cleveland City Schools.

Even though only four of the eight largest districts offer full-day kindergarten to some of their students, the sheer number of classrooms and students in these districts results in the majority (63%) of full-day kindergarten classes being found in large urban districts. The distribution of classrooms among different kinds of districts is illustrated in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5

Distribution of Full-Day Classrooms Across Comparison Groups*



* Comparison groups cluster districts with similar socio-economic characteristics.
** Districts not reporting include Cleveland City Schools.

Interviews with Ohio District Administrators

To understand how and why districts have made different kindergarten choices, LOEO briefly interviewed administrators from 26 school districts of varying socio-economic characteristics. Although there was considerable variation among district responses, some patterns emerged.

Alternate-day classes (children attend 5 hours of kindergarten every other day) are usually provided:

- as a cost-saving measure; or
- as a response to a transportation problem.

Half-day classes (children attend 2.5 hours of kindergarten every day) and **alternate-day classes** are offered when:

- districts or individual schools want full-day kindergarten classes but cannot afford them;
- districts or individual schools want full-day kindergarten classes but have no classroom space;
- districts or schools offer full-day kindergarten as an intervention only for at-risk children;
- districts or individual schools see no advantage to full-day classes.

Full-day classes (students attend at least 5 hours of class every day) are offered:

- when districts or individual schools believe it provides an academic advantage to all participating children;
- as a response to parents' desires; or
- as a strategy to prevent retention and school failure for selected children.

Most districts who offer a full-day class to some children would prefer to offer it to all children. Many superintendents mentioned pragmatic elements that contribute to this preference. Not only do superintendents believe that full-day kindergarten provides academic advantages, parents and teachers often prefer it. For example, one district that LOEO contacted allows parents to choose from among full-day, half-day, or alternate-day kindergarten classes. For the past two years, all but five families have chosen a full-day class.

As mentioned earlier, however, money and space are often barriers to increasing the number of full-day classrooms. Several districts told LOEO that even if they had the money for salaries and materials, a lack of facilities would prevent them from being able to offer full-day kindergarten to all of their children.

Providing full-day kindergarten

Both student activities and the strategy for providing instruction vary among districts that offer full-day classes:

- in some districts, students experience a more relaxed pace for the same activities found in half-day classes and spend increased time on each activity. This pattern was mentioned most frequently in districts that do not use full-day kindergarten as an intervention strategy;
- in some districts, students participate in two half-day classes or attend two different alternate-day classrooms, repeating the same experiences either in the same day or in consecutive days. This "more of a good thing" approach provides few special or remedial activities; and

- in some districts, students receive remedial instruction for half of the day and attend a regular half-day classroom during the other half. Some districts call this "extended-day" kindergarten.

Cost of full-day kindergarten

No district could tell us exactly how much more they spend to provide full-day kindergarten than they would spend for half-day. The few districts who were willing to provide an estimate generally included doubling half-day kindergarten expenditures for teacher salaries, classroom supplies, and facility costs. One superintendent had informally considered the costs of full-day and half-day kindergarten, and estimated that in his district half-day kindergarten costs were 60% of full-day costs. Districts told us that to fund full-day kindergarten, they:

- use their general fund (a combination of state and local resources) to pay for all kindergarten classes;

- use their general fund to pay for the equivalent of half-day classes, and use money from federal Title I or other programs for at-risk children to pay for the remaining class time; or

- use their general fund to pay for the equivalent of half-day classes, and charge partial tuition of parents who desire full-day schedules. This approach is used very infrequently.

Budget Proposals

Currently, the state includes 50% of the kindergarten Average Daily Membership (ADM) when it computes aid to districts, reflecting the minimum requirement that districts provide kindergarten for one half of the school day. The Executive budget and House budget proposals phase in changes for funding in 21 large urban districts, based on their providing full-day kindergarten classes. In addition, the House budget proposal ties FY 1999 allocations to districts successfully meeting performance audit requirements. Neither proposed budget provides any similar increase for poor, smaller urban or rural districts.

To provide this increased state aid to these districts, the Legislative Budget Office estimates a cost of approximately:

- $23.0 million in FY 1998 to provide state funding based on 75% of kindergarten ADM in the largest eight urban districts;

- $55.4 million in FY 1999 to provide funding based on 100% of kindergarten ADM in the largest eight urban districts; and

- $8.4 million in FY 1999 to provide funding based on 75% of kindergarten ADM in the 13 remaining urban districts.

Exhibit 6 lists the districts affected by the proposed funding change.

Exhibit 6
Districts Affected by Proposed Changes in Kindergarten Funding

Largest Eight Districts	Thirteen Remaining Urban Districts	
Akron	Cleveland Hts./	Lorain
Canton	University Hts.	Mansfield
Cleveland	East Cleveland	Middletown
Columbus	Elyria	Parma
Cincinnati	Euclid	Springfield
Dayton	Hamilton	South-Western
Toledo	Lima	Warren
Youngstown		

Attached is an excerpt from the Legislative Budget Office budget analysis of primary and secondary education line items.

Summary

Even though the number of Ohio's full-day kindergartens has increased in the last ten years, research about its effects is mixed. According to researchers, full-day kindergarten classrooms somewhat improve academic achievement for children, and significantly improve academic achievement for children at risk. These effects, however, may be gone by the time a child enters the second grade. In practice, superintendents of districts that provide full-day kindergarten perceive strong advantages. They attribute increased academic performance and adjustment to first grade to full-day kindergarten. Further, these superintendents indicate that many of their "customers," the taxpaying parents, desire the full-day classes.

APPENDICES

Appendix B
Excerpt from Legislative Budget Office Red Book for the Ohio Department of Education - 2/25/97

d. Average Daily Membership (ADM)

i. Additional Aid for Certain Districts Providing Extended Kindergarten or Full-Day Kindergarten

The Executive Budget provides additional aid for extended day or full day kindergarten to the big eight school districts in fiscal year 1998, and provides additional aid to an additional 13 urban school districts, in fiscal year 1999. Currently, kindergarten students are counted as 50 percent of one ADM. To calculate a district's basic average daily membership, or ADM, the following formula is used:

- the average daily membership in regular day classes for the first full school week in the month of October for kindergarten, and grades one through twelve (not including any pupil attending a joint vocational school or students counted in a vocational or special education unit);
- **minus** one-half of the kindergarten average daily membership;
- **plus** one-fourth of the pupils residing in the district and attending a joint vocational school.

For the big eight school districts, the executive proposal would count kindergarten students at 75 percent in fiscal year 1998, if the district provides extended day kindergarten, and at 100 percent in fiscal year 1999, if the district provides full-day kindergarten. For the remaining 13 districts of the 21 urban school districts, kindergarten students would be counted at 75 percent in fiscal year 1999 only, if they provide extended day kindergarten.

Big Eight School Districts

Akron, Canton, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Toledo, Youngstown

21 Urban School Districts

Big Eight school districts plus Lima, Hamilton, Middletown, Springfield, Cleveland Heights, East Cleveland, Euclid, Parma, South-Western, Elyria, Lorain, Mansfield, Warren

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How Many of the Above Districts Now Provide Extended and/or Full-Day Kindergarten?

The following table summarizes the extent to which the big eight school districts are providing kindergarten beyond a half day.

District	Kindergarten Program
Akron	20% of kindergarten students attend all-day every day kindergarten
Cincinnati	Provides ½ day kindergarten only
Cleveland	Has cut back to ½ day kindergarten due to budget constraints
Columbus	Provides all-day everyday kindergarten
Dayton	20% of kindergarten students attend all-day every day kindergarten
Toledo	Provides all-day every other day kindergarten, or ½ day kindergarten
Youngstown	27% of kindergarten students attend all-day every day kindergarten

The following table summarizes the extent to which the remainder of the urban 21 districts are providing kindergarten beyond a half day.

District	Kindergarten Program*
Cleveland Heights	38% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
East Cleveland	32% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
Hamilton	31% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
Lima	78% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
Mansfield	7% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
Middletown	16% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
Southwestern	2% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
Springfield	21% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten
Warren	40% of kindergarten students attend ADED kindergarten.

*ADED-All Day Every Day Kindergarten

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* Bold type face indicates literature reviews examining multiple studies.

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